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Connecticut State Appropriations Committee
300 Capital Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Good Evening:

The biennial budget presented by Governor Malloy on February 6th, recommends the consolidation of the Legislative Commissions into the Commission for Citizen Advocacy and the elimination of the Commission on Aging. The African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) believes that this recommendation and the budget implications would be a disservice to the priorities and well-being of the African-American community.

For fifteen years the AAAC has provided the General Assembly and the Executive Branch with an important link to the African-American community. The AAAC has addressed the educational, health, economic, civil rights and political well-being of the African-American community.

Despite having half of the staff eliminated less than three years ago, the AAAC has continued to provide positive improvements on the quality of life of African-Americans and residents of the State through its Education initiatives, Health Equity as well as Civil and Judicial Rights. As an example, the AAAC implemented and administered the KnowHowToGO-CT and the College Goal Sunday-CT programs to help reduce the educational achievement gap by making it possible for several thousand first generation and low income students to gain access to higher education and financial

aid. In support of that objective, the AAAC has awarded more than \$30,000 in scholarships to outstanding African American students through its Annual Classic Awards program.

The AAAC has helped identify health disparities and provide policy makers with cogent recommendations to improve the quality of life for all residents. The AAAC has led the battle to amend the Penn Act and prohibit racial profiling in traffic stops.

The estimated savings for disbanding the AAAC is less than .0001% of the biennial budget. This infinitesimal amount, if deleted, will wipe out an extraordinary return on investment for the African American community, the General Assembly as well as the Executive Branch. Each of the affected Commissions has leveraged several millions of dollars to the state from federal and foundation sources annually (the AAAC was pivotal in securing \$1.2M federal dollars for racial profiling prohibition). These and other future accomplishments will be in jeopardy if the AAAC is forced into consolidation.

The AAAC was brought to life in 1997 by the General Assembly through Public Act 97-11, section 24. It would be such a disservice and shame to take away the life of a productive adolescent commission that has had such a profound impact on the Connecticut African American community. Further, forming one commission to handle the responsibilities and impact of the five current commissions seems misguided at best and folly at worst. It's like taking the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and have men run it. Permit the current Commissions to have the life given to them by the General Assembly versus one consolidated commission that may appear more as public consumption instead of community impact.

Hence, I request the Appropriations Committee retain this mere pittance in the budget for the African American Affairs Commission so the AAAC can continue to positively impact the well-being of the Connecticut African American community.

Respectfully,

Alphonse Wright

Commissioner

State of Connecticut African American Affairs Commission